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FM SECSTATE WASHDC  
TO EU MEMBER STATES IMMEDIATE  
WESTERN HEMISPHERIC AFFAIRS DIPL POSTS IMMEDIATE  
HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE  
AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON IMMEDIATE  
INFO USMISSION USUN NEW YORK IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 075175

E.O. 12958: DECL: 3/20/08  
TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [UNHCR](#) [CU](#)  
SUBJECT: CUBA LAUNCHES CRACKDOWN AGAINST OPPOSITION - MORE  
THAN 70 ARRESTED

REF: A) STATE 10182; B) 02 STATE 185884

(U) CLASSIFIED BY WHA AA/S J. CURTIS STRUBLE FOR REASONS  
1.5 (B) AND (D).

11. (U) THIS IS AN ACTION MESSAGE.

12. (C) SUMMARY. THE CUBAN GOVERNMENT IS IN THE PROCESS OF  
CARRYING OUT ITS MOST SIGNIFICANT CRACKDOWN AGAINST THE  
OPPOSITION IN YEARS; SO FAR OVER 70 HAVE BEEN ARRESTED.  
POSTS ARE ASKED TO REQUEST HOST GOVERNMENTS TO JOIN US IN  
CALLING FOR THE RELEASE OF THESE PRISONERS. END SUMMARY.

13. (C) THE CUBAN GOVERNMENT HAS INSTITUTED THE MOST  
SIGNIFICANT CRACKDOWN AGAINST THE OPPOSITION MOVEMENT IN  
YEARS, BEGINNING ON MARCH 18. BY THE MORNING OF MARCH 21,  
MORE THAN 70 OPPOSITION MEMBERS HAD BEEN ARRESTED. WE ARE  
DISTURBED AT THE GOVERNMENT'S THREAT TO PROSECUTE THOSE  
ARRESTED UNDER "LAW 88," WHICH CARRIES SENTENCES OF 7 TO  
20 YEARS FOR ANYONE RECEIVING ASSISTANCE FROM THE USG.  
THE CRACKDOWN COINCIDED WITH UNCONTROLLED VERBAL ATTACKS  
AGAINST USINT FOR SEEKING TO ENCOURAGE NORMAL DEMOCRATIC  
DEVELOPMENT. THE GOVERNMENT ANNOUNCEMENT ON THE ARRESTS  
STATED THAT THOSE WHO HAD MET WITH USINT OFFICERS WOULD BE  
SUBJECT TO ARREST. THAT CUBA CHOSE TO MAKE THESE ARRESTS  
THE WEEK THE UN COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS OPENED IS  
ESPECIALLY APPALLING.

14. (C) POSTS ARE ASKED TO SHARE THE FOLLOWING TALKING  
POINTS WITH THE APPROPRIATE FOREIGN MINISTRY OFFICIALS.  
BESIDES THE TALKING POINTS, WE HAVE ALSO INCLUDED THE  
DEPARTMENT SPOKESMAN'S REMARKS ON THE ISSUE, MADE ON MARCH  
119. POSTS MAY WISH TO REFER TO REFTELS FOR BACKGROUND ON  
HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES IN CUBA. GENEVA MAY DRAW FROM POINTS  
AS APPROPRIATE.

15. (C) FOR LONDON, THE HAGUE, STOCKHOLM, DUBLIN,  
COPENHAGEN, VIENNA, AND BERLIN: SEPTTEL WILL ASK YOU TO  
SPECIFICALLY RAISE QUESTION OF CUBAN MEMBERSHIP IN  
COTONOU. YOU MAY WISH TO MAKE THIS DEMARCHE  
SIMULTANEOUSLY.

#### TALKING POINTS

-- AT LEAST 70 CUBANS HAVE BEEN ARRESTED BY STATE SECURITY  
FROM MARCH 18-21, SIMPLY FOR SEEKING THEIR FUNDAMENTAL  
RIGHTS. THAT NUMBER COULD RISE.

--THIS IS NOW THE MOST EGREGIOUS ACT OF POLITICAL  
REPRESSION IN CUBA IN YEARS.

--AMONG THOSE DETAINED INCLUDE MARTHA BEATRIZ ROQUE, RENE  
GOMEZ MANZANO, AND FELIX BONNE. THESE THREE LEADERS OF  
THE CUBAN OPPOSITION WERE CONDUCTING A PEACEFUL FAST  
PROTESTING THE DETENTION OF ANOTHER DISSIDENT (DR. OSCAR  
ELIAS BISCET) WHEN THEIR EVENT WAS BROKEN UP BY STATE  
SECURITY.

--AMONG THE DOZENS OF CUBANS ARRESTED INCLUDE THE  
FOLLOWING LEADERS OF THE OPPOSITION:  
TODOS UNIDOS LEADERS PEDRO PABLO ALVAREZ RAMOS, OSVALDO  
ALFONSO, FELIX NAVARRO, AND VICTOR ROLANDO ARROYO;

MEMBERS OF OSWALDO PAYA'S CHRISTIAN LIBERATION MOVEMENT JOSE DANIEL FERRER CASTILLO AND LUIS ENRIQUE FERRER CASTILLO; THE LEADER OF THE INDEPENDENT LIBRARY MOVEMENT, JISELLE DELGADO; AND, INDEPENDENT JOURNALISTS RAUL RIVERO, OSCAR ESPINOSA CHEPE, RICARDO GONZALEZ ALFONSO, AND JOSE LUIS GARCIA PANEQUE.

--WE ARE PARTICULARLY CONCERNED ABOUT THE CONNECTION MADE BY CUBAN STATE MEDIA BETWEEN THESE ARRESTS AND MEETINGS HELD BETWEEN MANY OF THOSE ARRESTED AND U.S. DIPLOMATS.

--THE CUBAN GOVERNMENT HAS THREATENED TO PROSECUTE THOSE ARRESTED UNDER "LAW 88," WHICH CARRIES SENTENCES OF 7 TO 20 YEARS FOR ANYONE RECEIVING ASSISTANCE FROM THE USG.

--THE ARRESTS INCLUDED EXTENSIVE SEARCHES OF OPPOSITION MEMBERS' HOMES. A WIFE OF ONE LEADER TOLD OUR DIPLOMATS THAT STATE SECURITY HAD CARRIED OUT A FIVE-HOUR SEARCH OF HER SMALL HOME, DESTROYING BEDDING, REMOVING NEARLY ALL OF HER BOOKS AND MAGAZINES, AND EVEN SEARCHING THE STRUCTURE OF THE HOUSE. WHILE CARRYING OUT THE SEARCH, THEY TURNED ON HER TELEVISION AND INSTRUCTED HER TO WATCH THE GOVERNMENT PROGRAM DENOUNCING U.S. DIPLOMATS' TIES TO "COUNTERREVOLUTIONARY TRAITORS" WHILE THEY DISASSEMBLED HER HOME. OTHER FAMILIES REPORTED EVEN LONGER AND MORE INTRUSIVE SEARCHES, SOME LASTING ALMOST TEN HOURS, WHICH FORCED THE OPPOSITION MEMBERS' SPOUSES AND CHILDREN TO LEAVE DURING THE NIGHT.

--THE UNITED STATES IS OUTRAGED AT THESE ARRESTS AND CONTINUED REPRESSION OF CUBANS WHO ARE SEEKING FREEDOM AND DEMOCRATIC CHANGE IN CUBA.

--WE HAVE CALLED UPON THE CUBAN GOVERNMENT TO RELEASE THESE PEOPLE IMMEDIATELY.

--WE ASK YOUR GOVERNMENT TO JOIN US IN DEMANDING THEIR RELEASE. THE CUBAN GOVERNMENT CANNOT BE ALLOWED TO TAKE THESE STEPS WITH IMPUNITY.

(FOR COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS MEMBERS AND OBSERVERS)  
--THAT THE CUBAN GOVERNMENT TOOK THIS ACTION AS THE UN COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS OPENED IN GENEVA IS ESPECIALLY EGREGIOUS. THE COMMISSION MUST RESPOND TO THIS ACTION.

(FOR EU MEMBERS)  
--WE HOPE THE EU WILL TAKE THIS ACTION INTO ACCOUNT WHEN CONSIDERING CUBA'S APPLICATION TO JOIN COTONOU.

PRESS STATEMENT - MARCH 19  
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STATEMENT BY RICHARD BOUCHER, SPOKESMAN

U.S. OUTRAGED BY CUBAN CRACKDOWN ON DISSIDENTS

THE UNITED STATES IS OUTRAGED BY THE CUBAN GOVERNMENT'S ANNOUNCED ARREST OF DOZENS OF OPPOSITION MEMBERS YESTERDAY EVENING. THIS IS AN APPALLING ACT OF INTIMIDATION AGAINST THOSE WHO SEEK FREEDOM AND DEMOCRATIC CHANGE IN CUBA. THESE PEOPLE HAVE BEEN ARRESTED FOR SIMPLY SPEAKING OUT, ONE OF THE MOST BASIC INTERNATIONALLY RECOGNIZED HUMAN RIGHTS. WE CALL ON THE CUBAN GOVERNMENT TO RELEASE THEM IMMEDIATELY AND FOR THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY TO JOIN US IN DEMANDING THEIR RELEASE.

THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF ARRESTS FOLLOWED A GOVERNMENT RADIO BROADCAST ATTACKING THE HEAD OF OUR INTERESTS SECTION AND THE OUTREACH EFFORTS OF OUR DIPLOMATS IN CUBA. THE CUBAN GOVERNMENT SUGGESTED THAT MANY OF THE DETAINEES WERE ARRESTED FOR MEETING WITH OUR DIPLOMATS. WE ALSO NOTE THAT THESE EVENTS COINCIDE WITH THE OPENING OF THE UN COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS IN GENEVA, OF WHICH CUBA IS A MEMBER. THE UNITED STATES CALLS ON THE COMMISSION TO CONDEMN THIS ACTION IN THE STRONGEST TERMS. CUBA HAS AGAIN DEMONSTRATED THAT IT IS NOT FIT TO SIT ON THIS COMMISSION.

WHILE THESE ARRESTS ARE INTENDED TO DEAL A BLOW AGAINST THE OPPOSITION MOVEMENT, THEY WILL NOT QUELL THE CUBAN'S PEOPLE'S DESIRE FOR FREEDOM AND THEY ONLY SERVE TO EXPOSE THE WEAKNESS AND DESPERATION OF THE REGIME AS IT REALIZES THAT IT IS NEARING ITS END.

POWELL